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TROOPS OF V CORPS' 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION ARTILLERY SENDING COMRADES HOME FROM IRAQ

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TIKRIT, Iraq — For many Soldiers, redeployment can never come soon enough.

But the Soldiers of Task Force Breakout II know they will be the last in their division to go home, because their mission is essential to the redeployment of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division and the units attached to it.

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Infantry Division Artillery is serving as the division's command post in Kuwait for Task Force Breakout II.



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Sgt. 1st Class Scott A. Davis, a motor sergeant with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Infantry Division Artillery, makes a preliminary inspection of a vehicle just washed for shipping home while its operator, Staff Sgt. Jerry W. Matthews of the 1st Battalion, 150th Armor Regiment, watches and waits for the results, at Camp Doha, Kuwait.

"We are the interface between the units that are on their way home and the units here that are pushing them out," said HHB's Maj. Michael R. Eastman, who is serving as the task force's operations officer.

"Normally they (the artillery Soldiers) are coordinating fires. Now they schedule loading of ships and air flights while simultaneously continuing operations in Iraq," said Col. Richard C. Longo, commander of 1st Infantry Division Artillery.

This is not the first time HHB has changed gears and adapted to a new mission. It was tasked as a maneuver headquarters in An Najaf and participated in the first Task Force Breakout.

Four hundred fifty personnel are involved in helping Soldiers process their equipment and get home.

A large number of division engineers work at the Port of Aushaybah, Kuwait, getting equipment on the ships. About 230 are taking care of operations at the port, and the rest are at scattered camps across Kuwait, receiving units headed for home.

"We're happy to be here to help them get on their way," said Eastman. "Everyone that comes down here is ready to go home, excited about it, and proud of what they've done."

Each unit takes about two or three days to convoy down to Navistar, Kuwait. There the convoys are linked up and escorted to Camp Victory to download different classes of supply, such as spare parts, fuel, and extra food at the "Four Corners" download site. Any armor that has been added to vehicles is stripped off.

Vehicles then undergo an intense cleaning and rigorous customs inspection. Wheeled vehicles are processed here, while tracked vehicles go to Camp Arifjan.

After customs inspection, the vehicles are secured in a "sterile yard" until they are ready for transportation to the marshalling area at the port.

"We do not want to bring (home) any type of disease, or anything that might be present in this area of the world," said Capt. Philip M. Jorgensen of the division's Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 701st Main Support Battalion, who serves as Camp Arifjan's wash rack and sterile yard officer.

Some vehicles -- like M113 Armored Personnel Carriers, have their engines pulled so every bit of dirt that may have ended up on the vehicle can be cleaned away.

Once a ship is ready to take on cargo, a port detail drives the vehicles onto the ship, starting their two- to three-week trip home in earnest, Eastman said.

"Ultimately no matter what shapes it comes down here, we'll get it through and get it home," Eastman said.

"It's a great mission and I can hardly complain."

